xi) The National Institute for Fashion Technology (NIFT), its seven branches, and the Apparel Training & Design Centres (ATDCs) are running various courses/programmes to meet the skilled manpower requirements of the textile industry, especially apparel, in the field of design, merchandising and marketing.

xii) Facilities like eco-testing laboratories have been created to enable exporters to get garments/textiles pre-tested so that they conform to the requirements of the importing countries.

(c) Main obstacles for enhancing textile exports, *inter alia*, include the following:—

- United States (US), European Union (EU) and Canada account for major share of world trade in textiles, and due to the quota restrictions imposed by these countries till 31st December, 2004 under the erstwhile Multi-Fibre Arrangement, India's export growth to these markets was restrained.
- Lack of investments towards modernisation and technological up-gradation, particularly in weaving and processing segments, are the weak areas that have been inhibiting the growth of textile exports in real terms.
- Duty free access to some of our competitors in major markets through Preferential Trading Agreement and Generalised Scheme of Preferences.
- High tariff on finished products imposed by some major importing countries.

(d) The steps taken by the Government to tackle the problems have been enumerated above in reply to parts (a) & (b) of the question. Further, after removal of the quota restrictions, Indian textiles exports to US, EU etc. have shown increasing trend.

Removal of textile items from the ambit of ECA

887. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have decided to remove all textile items from the ambit of Essential Commodities Act except for hank yarn;

(b) if so, details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether it is proposed to enforce stringent labeling norms for garment manufacturers?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI SHANKERSINH VAGHELA): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The Government has decided to remove only (i) Cotton and Woolen Textiles and (ii) Raw Cotton either ginned or un-ginned and Cotton Seeds from the ambit of Essential Commodities Act.

(c) Yes, Sir.

New handloom policy

888. SHRI UDAY PRATAP SINGH:
SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY:

Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that government have decided to announce new handloom policy to ameliorate the sufferings of the weaving community;

(b) if so, whether it will be announced during the ensuing Winter Session of the Parliament; and

(c) what are main features of the new handloom policy?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI SHANKERSINH VAGHELA): (a) to (c) National Textile Policy was announced in the year 2000. The handloom sector also forms a part of the National Textile Policy 2000. The details of the National Handloom Policy incorporated in the National Textile Policy 2000 are as under:—

The handloom sector is known for its heritage and the tradition of excellent craftsmanship. It provides livelihood to millions of weavers and craftsperson. The industry has not only survived but also grown over the decades due to its inherent strength like flexibility of production in small quantities, openness to innovation, low level of capital investment and immense possibility of designing fabrics. Government will continue to accord priority to this sector. Steps would be taken to promote and develop its exclusiveness for the global market. Measure will include the following:—

- Training modules will be developed for weavers engaged in the production of low value added items, who may not be able to survive the competition consequent on globalization, with the objective of upgrading their skills to enable them to find alternate employment in the textile or other allied sector;